

# SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

104th Congress  
1st Session

Vote No. 356

August 3, 1995, 8:10 p.m.  
Page S-11296 Temp. Record

## DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION/Seawolf Submarine

**SUBJECT:** National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1996 . . . S. 1026. McCain amendment No. 2090.

### ACTION: AMENDMENT REJECTED, 30-70

**SYNOPSIS:** As reported, S. 1026, the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 1996, will authorize \$264.7 billion in total budget authority for the Department of Defense, national security programs of the Department of Energy, civil defense, and military construction accounts. This amount is \$7 billion more than requested (\$5.3 billion more for procurement and \$1.7 billion more for research and development), and is \$2.6 billion less than the amount approved in the House-passed bill.

**The McCain amendment** would strike the \$1.507 billion authorization for the third Seawolf attack submarine. Further, it would prohibit the use of fiscal year 1996 funds for paying costs incurred for terminating any procurement contract for that submarine, including for advance procurement contracts. Only funds for fiscal years prior to 1996 could be used to pay termination costs.

**Those favoring** the amendment contended:

The Seawolf submarine is a technological marvel made to fight an adversary that no longer exists. It is one of the finest, if not the finest, weapon ever made. However, we no longer need it and cannot afford it. Our military forces have been cut by 35 percent in real terms in the past 10 years, and another 10 percent cut will be made by the end of the decade. At the same time, they are being deployed at a greater rate than ever. In our discussions with military leaders, they say that their greatest procurement needs are in strategic lift, tactical air forces, and advanced conventional munitions. The Seawolf is never mentioned. These legitimate procurement needs are not even their major concern--what they tell us they really need are adequate training and operating funds. Readiness levels have fallen in all branches of the service, and operating tempos are at unacceptably high levels. Morale is falling, and advance procurement is virtually nonexistent. Our Armed Forces, in short, are being eviscerated, and our colleagues want us to spend \$1.5 billion more on this Cold War toy.

The capabilities of the Seawolf submarine are without peer. It is made to survive and win a strategic war with the Soviet Union.

(See other side)

YEAS (30)		NAYS (70)				NOT VOTING (0)	
Republicans (17 or 31%)	Democrats (13 or 28%)	Republicans (37 or 69%)		Democrats (33 or 72%)		Republicans (0)	Democrats (0)
Ashcroft	Baucus	Abraham	Jeffords	Akaka	Johnston		
Bond	Bingaman	Bennett	Kassebaum	Biden	Kennedy		
Brown	Bradley	Campbell	Kemphorne	Boxer	Kerrey		
Burns	Bumpers	Chafee	Kyl	Breaux	Kerry		
Coats	Conrad	Cochran	Lott	Bryan	Levin		
Domenici	Dorgan	Cohen	Mack	Byrd	Lieberman		
Gorton	Feingold	Coverdell	McConnell	Daschle	Mikulski		
Gramm	Harkin	Craig	Murkowski	Dodd	Moseley-Braun		
Grams	Kohl	D'Amato	Nickles	Exon	Moynihan		
Grassley	Lautenberg	DeWine	Packwood	Feinstein	Nunn		
Hatfield	Leahy	Dole	Santorum	Ford	Pell		
Lugar	Murray	Faircloth	Simpson	Glenn	Pryor		
McCain	Wellstone	Frist	Smith	Graham	Reid		
Pressler		Gregg	Snowe	Heflin	Robb		
Roth		Hatch	Specter	Hollings	Rockefeller		
Shelby		Helms	Thomas	Inouye	Sarbanes		
Stevens		Hutchison	Thompson		Simon		
		Inhofe	Thurmond				
			Warner				
						<b>EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:</b>	
						1—Official Business	
						2—Necessarily Absent	
						3—Illness	
						4—Other	
						<b>SYMBOLS:</b>	
						AY—Announced Yea	
						AN—Announced Nay	
						PY—Paired Yea	
						PN—Paired Nay	

The follow-on attack submarine will have many of its capabilities, but it will not be quite as expensive. The first two Seawolfs cost more than \$5 billion each to complete; the third and final Seawolf has already cost \$900 million, and will cost \$1.5 billion more to complete. The McCain amendment would bar completion of this third Seawolf. The contractors have estimated that the net savings after termination costs of this action will be only \$315 million to \$615 million. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO), however, which does not have a vested interest to low-ball the savings, suggested that the net savings would be between \$1.1 billion and \$1.3 billion. We can foolishly build expensive Seawolf submarines and use them in conventional wars, or we can use our existing, cheaper SSN-688 submarines which can fight in such wars just as effectively. The extra capabilities of the Seawolf are simply not needed for the types of wars the United States has been fighting since the end of the Cold War and will be fighting into the foreseeable future.

In defending the Seawolf program and the production of a follow-on attack submarine, our colleagues have exaggerated the threat posed by Russia. Russia's military is collapsing. It is bogged down fighting in Chechnya; its officers in Eastern Europe have been living in boxcars and tents; less than half its conscripts even bother to show up, much less get inducted; its fleets are rusting at its piers because it cannot afford oil. Nevertheless, our colleagues assure us that fast, quiet submarines are Russia's top priority, and that we better make sure that we have better submarines than it does. This claim stretches all credulity. Russia cannot afford to make a serious challenge to the United States' SSN-688 fleet. Further, no other country in the world has submarines with anything close to the capabilities of SSN-688s. Our colleagues have mentioned that 40-some countries have submarines, but we are hardly impressed. The slow, clanking tubs they possess do not threaten U.S. interests.

The major reason that the Defense Department seems to want to move forward with the third Seawolf submarine is to preserve the industrial base while the next generation of attack submarines is designed. By building the submarine, the Department will be able to keep open both the Norfolk Shipyard and the Electric Boat Shipyard, which are the only shipyards with nuclear capabilities in the United States. We question the value both of keeping open two nuclear shipyards and of producing a new attack submarine. On the first point, the Navy has estimated that billions of dollars could be saved by contracting out of the Norfolk yard only. Our colleagues say that it is important that we preserve the ability to make nuclear ships, but we think one yard can preserve that ability as well as two, and it can do it for less. On the second point, we do not see why we need to build a new attack submarine, which is envisioned as a cheap version of the Seawolf, when the SSN-688s will be able to meet our needs well into the next century. Each of those submarines has an average life of 30 years. Our colleagues want us to mothball a number of those submarines with an average of 18 years of remaining usefulness, for a savings of \$700 million each, and to replace them with new attack submarines that will cost \$1.75 billion each. Those new submarines will be better, but they will be giving us excess capabilities that we do not need for any foreseeable conflict in which we may be involved. The net cost for no net gain will therefore be \$1 billion per submarine built. Our colleagues want us to build around a dozen of these \$1 billion mistakes over the next two decades.

We think this plan should be reconsidered. We do not need new Seawolfs, nor do we need new attack submarines, nor do we need to keep open two nuclear submarine shipyards. The United States has too many legitimate unmet defense needs to waste money on strategic warfare submarines. We therefore strongly support the McCain amendment.

**Those opposing the amendment contended:**

We will start with the points on which we believe that we agree with our colleagues. The United States needs to have an attack submarine fleet. The United States currently has 83 SSN-688 attack submarines. The Bottom-Up Review found that the United States has a long-term requirement for a force of 45 to 55 attack submarines. The cost of completing the third Seawolf attack submarine, which is greatly superior to SSN-688 attack submarines, is \$1.5 billion. The Joint Chiefs of Staff have determined that the United States needs 10 to 12 submarines that are as quiet as Seawolf submarines by the year 2012. SSN-688 submarines are not as quiet. Seawolf submarines are expensive. The third Seawolf submarine, for which \$900 million has already been appropriated, will cost a total of \$2.4 billion. The Navy intends to build a cheaper follow-on version of the Seawolf that will cost approximately \$1.75 billion each to build. This follow-on version will be markedly quieter than SSN-688 submarines, and will in other ways be superior. The Navy's intention is to maintain low production levels at both the Norfolk Naval Shipyard and at the Electric Boat Shipyard, because these two shipyards are the only places capable of building nuclear warships and the Government does not want either to close for fear of losing technological capabilities.

The main point on which we seem to disagree is that the United States is losing its qualitative edge in submarines. Our colleagues assumption is that our current SSN-688 fleet will be sufficient well into the next century to meet any likely threats. They know that the Joint Chiefs have called for at least 12 advanced, quiet subs by the year 2012, but they disagree with that call because they do not think they are needed. In defense of their belief, they have accurately described the disarray of most elements of the Russian military. They have then made the fallacious claim that because most elements of the Russian military are in collapse, all elements, including its submarine fleet, are also in a state of collapse. They have no evidence for this assumption, and in fact, all the evidence controverts their claim on the state of the Russian submarine fleet. First, the Russian Defense Minister has stated that "A nuclear submarine fleet is the future of the armed forces. The number of tanks and guns will be reduced, as well as the infantry, but a modern navy is a totally different thing." Second, Russia has in the water today 6 improved Akula-class submarines which are quieter than SSN-688s. Next year, it will launch the Severodvinsk, which will be its first true multimission submarine, and which will be both

AUGUST 3, 1995

VOTE NO. 356

---

quieter and faster than SSN-688s. Throughout the Cold War, the United States had a military edge in submarine technology. If the United States does not start launching improved submarines soon, it will lose that edge. Russia may no longer be our implacable enemy, but the United States has always armed itself based on the capabilities rather than the intentions of other countries. We do not want to cede our submarine superiority to any other nation. Our colleagues obstinately refuse to believe that Russia has developed submarines that are better than all of our submarines except for the Seawolf. We are willing to face reality. Either we build new submarines, or we will be at a military disadvantage. Our choice is to build new submarines.

We do not want, however, to build new Seawolfs. They are too expensive. Instead, we favor building cheaper versions of the Seawolf submarine that will still be better than the new Russian submarines. We should build the third Seawolf for two reasons, though. First, completing it will be cheaper than building one of the new attack submarines and it will be more capable. If we can get one of the twelve advanced submarines that the Joint Chiefs have called for by 2012 with extra capabilities and at less cost, and we can, then we should jump at the chance. The other reason for completing the third Seawolf is that it will make the construction of the follow-on attack submarine cheaper because it will keep open the production line until that design is finished and ready to go into production. Once a production line shuts down, it costs an enormous sum to start it back up again.

Overall, the costs of the U.S. submarine program should not grow. When our fleet is cut in accordance with the Bottom-Up review to about 50 submarines, and with 12 of those submarines being Seawolf and follow-on attack submarines, half of the SSN-688 fleet will be retired for savings that will more than cover the costs of building the new attack submarines. At the same time, by keeping a low steady, production level, the United States will retain its ability to produce nuclear submarines. We do not favor this as a "jobs" program for shipyard workers, as has been implied--those shipyards will lose nearly all the jobs that they have historically had, leaving skeleton crews for the low levels of production that are planned. We favor this plan, instead, to protect our national security. We urge our colleagues to do likewise by voting against the McCain amendment.